

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (original) A particle comprising vitamin B 12-containing microbial biomass and a solid carrier.
2. (original) A particle according to claim 1 wherein the weight ratio between the vitamin B 12- containing microbial biomass and the solid carrier is between 0.2-5 and/or the particles have been prepared by spray-drying (i.e. the particles are spray-dried).
3. (currently amended) A particle according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein the (or average) particle size is comprised between 0.2 um and 2000 um, and/or particles have been prepared by co-spray drying the biomass and the solid carrier.
4. (currently amended) A particle according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1 wherein the vitamin B 12-containing microbial biomass comprises a bacterial strain of the genus Acetobacterium, Acetobacter, Agrobacterium, Alcaligenes, Arthrobacter, Azobacter, Bacillus, Clostridium, Corynebacterium, Escherichia, Eubacterium, Flavobacterium, Methanobacillum, Methanosarcina, Mycobacterium, Propionibacterium, Proteus, Pseudomonas, Rhizobium, Rhodopseudomonas, Salmonella, Serratia, Streptococcus, Streptomyces and/or Xanthomonas.
5. (currently amended) A particle according to ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 1 wherein there is a core or central portion comprising the solid carrier and a coating or outer layer comprising the biomass.
6. (currently amended) A particle according to ~~any preceding claim~~ claim 1 wherein the solid carrier comprises a carbohydrate, a protein, or a mixture thereof.
7. (original) A particle according to claim 6 wherein the solid carrier comprises casein, whey, milk, maltodextrin, corn steep solids, starch, edible flour, or a mixture thereof preferably as a powder.

8. (original) A particle according to claim 7 wherein the edible flour is obtainable from wheat, rice, barley, maize, oat, rye, potato, banana, or a mixture thereof.

9. (original) A method for producing particles comprising vitamin B 12-containing microbial biomass and a solid carrier, the method comprising co-spray drying the biomass and the carrier.

10. (original) A method according to claim 9 wherein a liquid comprising the vitamin B 12- containing microbial biomass and a solid carrier in powder form are used.

11. (currently amended) A method according to claim 9 ~~or 10~~ wherein the biomass and carrier are conveyed into a drying chamber of a spray-dryer through separate streams or ports.

12. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any of claims 9 to 11~~ claim 9 wherein a liquid suspension of biomass and the solid carrier are contacted with each other inside the spray-dryer.

13. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any of claims 9 to 12~~ claim 9 wherein the weight ratio between the vitamin B 12-containing microbial biomass and the solid carrier is between 0.2 and 5.

14. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any of claims 9 to 13~~ claim 9, wherein the solid carrier has a particle size equal to or lower than 500 pm.

15. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 9 to 14~~ claim 9 wherein the vitamin B12-containing microbial biomass comprises, or is obtainable from a bacterial strain of the genus Propionibacterium.

16. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 9 to 15~~ claim 9 wherein the solid carrier is a carbohydrate, a protein, or a mixture thereof.

17. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 9 to 16~~ claim 9 wherein the solid carrier comprises edible flour.

18. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any of claims 9 to 17~~ claim 9 wherein the liquid comprising the biomass has been subjected to concentration or

evaporation, pasteurisation and/or diafiltration prior to spray drying and/or the liquid is atomised inside the spray dryer.

19. (currently amended) A method of ~~any one of claims 10 to 18~~ claim 10 wherein the concentration of vitamin B12- containing microbial biomass in the liquid suspension is between 50 and 300 g/l.

20. (currently amended) A particle comprising vitamin B12-containing microbial biomass and a solid carrier obtainable by a method according to ~~any one of claims 9 to 19~~ claim 9.

21. (currently amended) A composition comprising particles according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 8 or 20 or particles preparable by a method according to any of claims 9 to 19~~ claim 1.

22. (currently amended) An animal feed comprising particles according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 8 or 20~~ claim 1.

23. (currently amended) A composition edible by humans comprising particles according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 8 or 20~~ claim 1.

24. (original) A composition according to claim 23, which is a human food or food supplement, foodstuff, nutritional or dietary supplement or a pharmaceutical composition.